

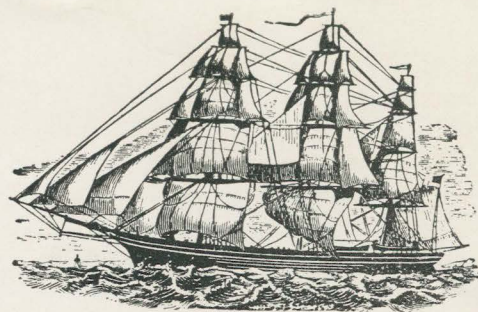
SEA LETTER

Published by the San Francisco Maritime Museum

Foot of Polk Street, San Francisco

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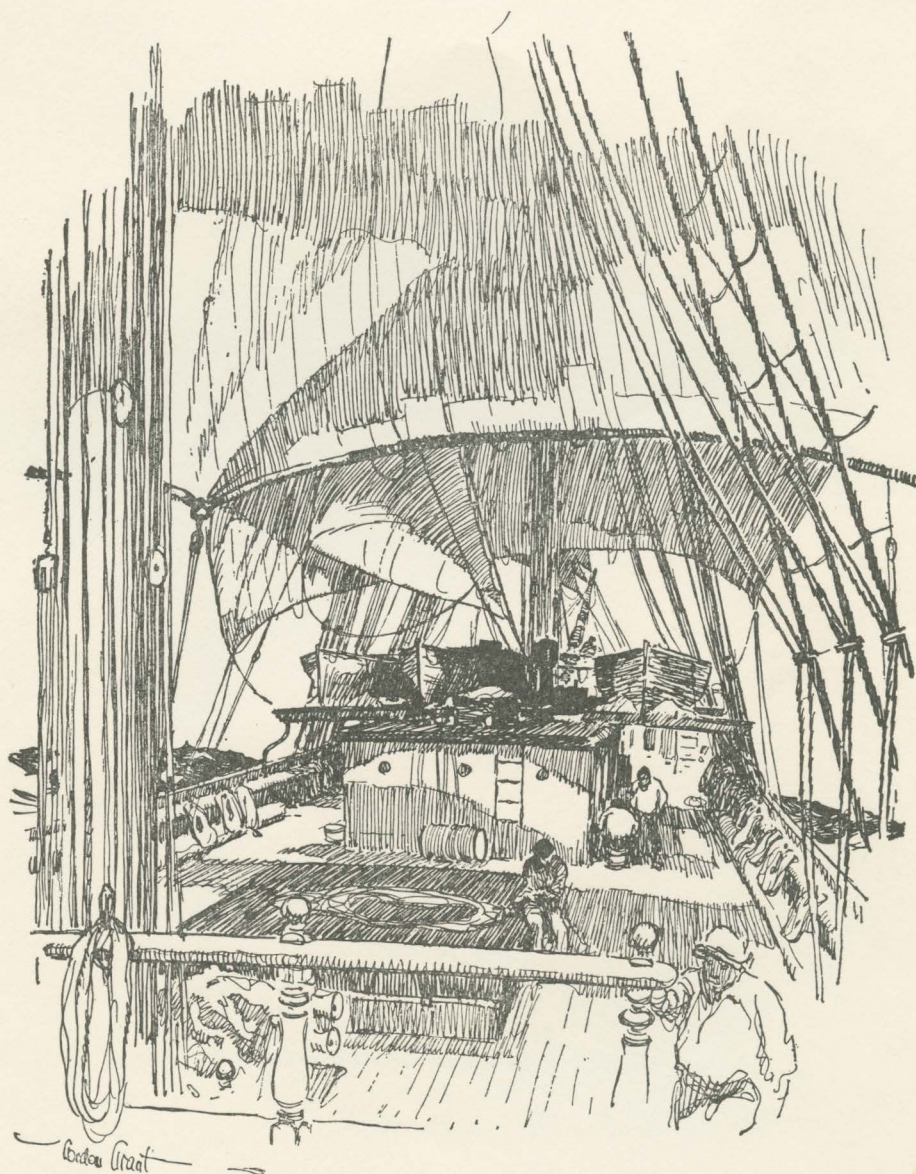
WHEN BALCLUTHA SAILED FOR ALASKA PACKERS . . .

Loaded with lumber and cannery supplies, the Alaska Packers' Ship *Star of Alaska* (*Balclutha*) lies at a San Francisco wharf preparing for her annual voyage to the north. The date is between 1906, when the Packers' first outfitted the vessel under her new name, and 1911, when they lengthened her poop to provide greater accommodations for the gang carried north each spring.

At the right is the San Francisco Bay Scow Schooner *Alma*, a craft which will soon be restored to join the *C. A. Thayer*, *Wapama*, and *Eureka* as part of the Museum's "Project X, now officially the San Francisco Maritime State Historical Monument".

THE GREAT STAR FLEET

By HAROLD D. HUYCKE







STAR FLEET

By HAROLD D. HUYCKE

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Since sailing yachtsmen of today are the perpetuators of the traditions from the days when sailing vessels plied the seas' trade routes, we are happy to present this nostalgic article on the famous Star Fleet of the Alaska Packers, which is still a live memory to many West Coast yachtsmen. We are especially happy to show these photographs, most of which, Mr. Huycke tells us, are newly discovered and hitherto unpublished. Yachtsmen may be specially interested to note that one photo was taken in 1899 by a young professional photographer who later sailed twice around the world single-handed—fellow name of Harry Pidgeon.)

EVEN IF YOU LIVED in the San Francisco Bay area in September, 1930, the chances are you weren't aware of the arrival of the ship *Star of Alaska* from Alaskan waters, rolling easily through the Golden Gate in tow of a hard-working steamer. That was on the 19th of September, and the *Star of Alaska*, a steel full-rigger 44 years old at the time, brought to an end an era in Pacific Coast maritime history.

Star of Alaska was one of 19 ships whose names began with *Star*, that once called the port of San Francisco "home." There was the *Star of Bengal*, gone these 50 years with the bones of a hundred Chinese entombed in her rusted hulk; *Star of Falkland*, which went out of the Golden Gate in the spring of 1928 and never returned; *Star of*

Ships of the Alaska Packers fleet (above) beating up into Unimak Pass, through the Aleutian Islands, and (left) wintering in the Oakland dockyard. The bark being moved is the "Star of Finland"

San Francisco Maritime Museum



The Packers fleet off the mouth of the Nushagak River in Bristol Bay, Bering Sea

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Chinese cannery hands gambling on the forecastle head of the bark "Harvester," bound from Cook Inlet to San Francisco in 1899. The man by the starboard rail looks like a loser. (Harry Pidgeon, who took this picture, later sailed twice around the world single-handed in the yawl "Islander" between 1921 and 1937)

England, which knew the City by the Golden Gate long before the fire of 1906; *Star of Shetland*, which left the Bay scarcely 20 years ago on a voyage to a scrapyard in Japan. There were many more, each as different from her sisters as human beings are from each other.

These ships belonged to the Alaska Packers Association of San Francisco. In 1893 the Association was formed by merging small Alaskan salmon canneries, which had been suffering and expanding alternately with the fluctuat-

ing demand for canned salmon. The waters of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest teemed with salmon. The relative inaccessibility of the fishing grounds called for ships that could sail across more than 2,000 miles of open, oft-times stormy seas, and bring a season's pack of salmon home in the fall. Supplies and workmen could be taken to the cannery and fishing sites by sea only. The need for ships of large carrying capacity was thus obvious.

There was at that time a well-established shipbuilding industry on the

Pacific Coast to meet the growing shipping demands of the lumbering and logging interests. These yards built sailing vessels suited to the coastwise and limited offshore lumber trades, but except for a few Pacific Coast-built schooners and barkentines, the new Association found the larger square-riggers from the New England shipyards more suitable.

The first few years they chartered an assortment of ships owned mostly in San Francisco. Salmon fishing in Alaska was a seasonal occupation, starting in late spring and running toward the end of August, and by chartering the Packers avoided the expense of maintaining a fleet during the winter. But they ran into the problem of the limited facilities of the chartered ships. Salmon packers were not exactly considered to be in the deep-sea trade, but rather more like "floating warehouses." Their actual time at sea rarely exceeded three months a year. Within seven years of organization, outright ownership of vessels became established policy and thereafter only extra-large catches forced the Association into the charter market for additional bottoms.

By the turn of the century came the problem of replacements. The large square-riggers the Packers owned were not new, and they were of wooden construction. American shipyards, generally speaking, hadn't turned to steel ships as had the European builders. Then, as now, American law prohibited the use of foreign-built ships in coastwise trade, except for repaired wrecks and ships admitted to United States Registry by Special Act of Congress.

In 1898 the Hawaiian Islands were annexed by a joint resolution of Congress but this did not immediately change the status of ships owned by

Hawaiian citizens or ships registered in Hawaii but owned by Americans. However, within two years another Act of Congress provided that all ships that carried Hawaiian registry between June 14 and August 12, 1900, would be entitled to the full rights of American coastwise trade. Several British-built ships were immediately affected, and in the two months' leeway several additional ships were registered in Hawaii.

Thus a good-sized fleet of iron and steel ships became eligible for the Alaska Packers trade. The small ship *Euterpe* was the first of 19 iron and steel square-riggers to fly their swallow-tail houseflag. After the turn of the century, the Association bought only iron and steel ships, though there were a half-dozen wooden ships in the fleet for nearly a quarter of a century more. The Downeasters *Indiana*, *Bohemia*, *Santa Clara* and *L. J. Morse*, veterans of the Cape Horn trade, season after season sailed up to Kvichak, Nushagak, Naknek, Chignik and other canneries in Alaska.

The Association maintained its own dockyard in the Oakland Estuary and here, in winter, the whole fleet would be laid up and repairs and alterations effected. Men who later became masters of American ships, both sail and steam, found employment as riggers and sailors in maintenance crews in their youth in the yard at Paru Street in Alameda. If the jobs on offshore



Widerstrom Photo

Tallying fish from the salmon boats into a cannery scow at Kvichak Bay in 1921 (above)

The Packers' ship "Paramita" (below) ashore on Fox Island, Alaska, in May, 1914

San Francisco Maritime Museum





What the Equator was to deepwater sailors, *Unimak Pass* was to Alaska-bound fishermen—where green-horns were initiated with horseplay. A new hand gets his "Unimak shave" aboard the "*Star of France*" in 1919

vessels were scarce, a sailor on the beach might be hired by the Alaska Packers to keep the fleet in condition. With the end of winter in sight, a couple of the ships would be sent to the Puget Sound area for cargoes of coal and box shooks, which would be brought to San Francisco and distributed throughout the fleet for transportation to the canneries in southern Alaska or Bristol Bay.

From San Francisco to Alaska was approximately 2,500 miles, not far as sea voyages go. Each ship was loaded with supplies, manned by fishermen who served as sailors, and crowded with cannery workers. The whole summer's operation was sustained by the supplies and manpower carried in the sailing fleet. At the end of the fishing season the salmon, canned and boxed, were loaded in the homeward-bound ships. The operation covered seven months at most. Since each ship carried upwards of 100 men and supplies for the season, alterations were necessary in the ship's living quarters and storage spaces.

On ships like the *Star of Alaska*, *Star of Holland*, *Star of France*, *Star of Iceland* and *Star of Russia*, poop decks were lengthened as much as 75 feet to provide additional living quarters for fishermen and cannery hands. Tween-decks spaces were given over to living quarters, large water tanks and several kitchens or galleys. The Chinese were well represented in the canneries, while Italian and Scandinavian fishermen from San Francisco Bay made up the fishing crews.

Fishing methods in Southern Alaska differed from those in Bristol Bay. The water in southern Alaska was too clear for gillnetting, so traps were used. Trap fishing required smaller crews for the ships that went to the Chignik, Karluk and Alitak. In the early days of the century, fishermen signed on the windjammers as sailors, being paid on a quarterly basis; one quarter for the run to Alaska, one quarter for unloading

the cannery supplies; one quarter for loading the salmon pack and the last quarter for sailing the ship back to San Francisco. The Bristol Bay ships generally had larger crews than those going to southern canneries, but even so, good sailormen who knew square-riggers were often scarce.

Crews were split into gangs of from 12 to 18. Prior to World War I, gangs numbered 18 men. Two were assigned to keeping quarters on the ship clean, one man to repair and keep nets in order, and the balance of the gang to do the ship's work under way. Upon arrival of the ship at its cannery both anchors were let go and a swivel shackled into the chains so the ship could swing freely. As the stores were unloaded, the upper yards were lowered to improve stability. All hands then turned to in getting the cannery ready for operation, doing everything from carpentry to overhauling the boats and barges. The Chief Mate was beach boss, more often than not, and it was he who had to make order out of chaos. With the growing strength of the fisherman's union, delineations were made in the work performed by fishermen, and eventually the carpentry and miscellaneous chores were lessened.

The ships were as varied and colorful a lot as were ever owned by one company. The Alaska Packers were shipowners from 1893 until World War II caused the government to requisition the few steamers they still owned, and over this period they owned and operated ships of all sizes and rigs.

During the first few years casualties were rather heavy. The ship *Raphael* was wrecked near Karluk in July 1895, and the following year the ship *James A. Borland* was lost on Gugidak Island. Navigation in fog-shrouded and unmarked channels was hazardous at best, and it is a wonder that more ships weren't lost in those early years. In 1898 the big wooden full-rigger *Sterling* went aground on an un-named and unmarked shoal in the Bering Sea, so

far from any assistance that she had to be given up. Today's charts of those waters show "Sterling Shoals."

In 1900 the wooden ship *Merom* was wrecked on the beach at Karluk. The following year, the wooden full-rigger *Santa Clara* was wrecked at Trial Island near Puget Sound, while going after a cargo of coal, but survived to remain in service for 25 years more.

In addition to their own fleet, the Association chartered 57 ships over a period of 18 years, but by 1911 the need for chartering had diminished. At the turn of the century they owned 13 wooden ships. In 1901 the small iron bark *Euterpe* was purchased followed by the iron bark *Coalinga*, and in the following year by the iron bark *Himalaya*. All three, registering a little over 1,000 tons each, were British-built and had been in the emigrant and colonial trades for over 30 years. Had it not been for their sound construction and relatively heavy iron plates the ships would have been obsolete.

During the next four years the Association bought six more ships and barks from San Francisco owners, and by the end of 1906 had nine iron and steel ships.

Among this group was a quartet of iron Belfast-built ships, which had already acquired some fame as fast windjammers while under the Red Duster of England. A little of their former glory rubbed off on their less glamorous sisters when the names of the other five were changed to conform to the rakish four Irish ships. Thus the *Star of France*, *Star of Russia*, *Star of Bengal* and *Star of Italy* formed the nucleus of an American-flag "*Star*" fleet.

With 15 years of seafaring behind her under British ownership, the ship *Balclutha* became the *Star of Alaska*. *Euterpe*, beginning her 35th year at sea, became the *Star of India*; *Coalinga* with a colorful past as a competitor of the clipper ships became *Star of Chile*; *Abby Palmer*, originally the British bark *Blairmore*, became *Star of England*; and the *Himalaya*, of the same vintage and history as *Euterpe*, became *Star of Peru*.

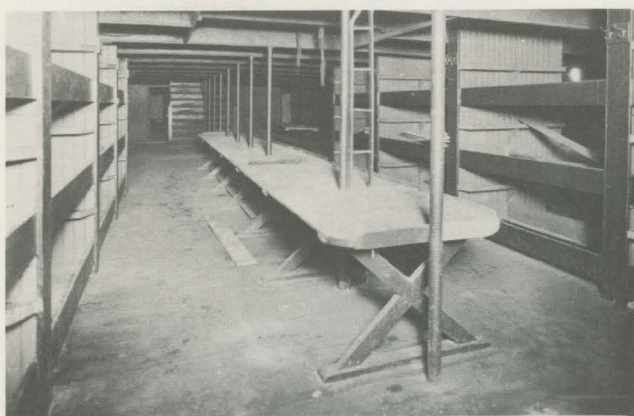
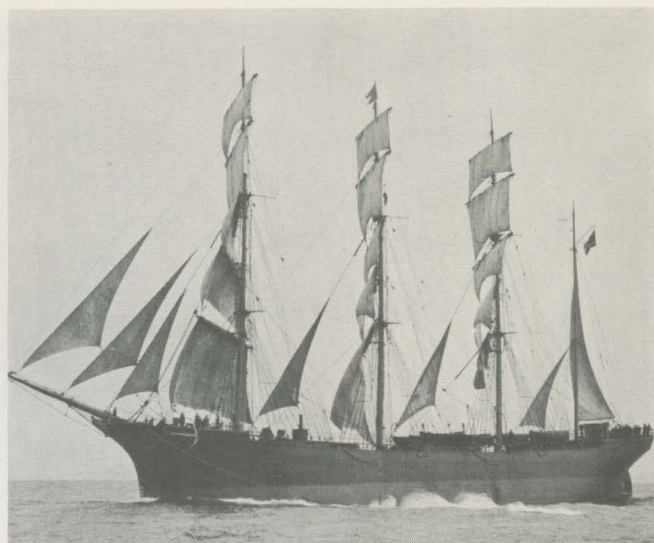
Old deepwater sailors will tell you today that they "lost track" of these ships once they went into the salmon fisheries. But the ships themselves continued to make their own histories. *Star of Bengal* served only two seasons in the Alaskan trade and came to an agonizing end Sept. 20, 1908, when she was being towed from her cannery station at Fort Wrangell in southeastern Alaska at the start of her voyage home. Heavy weather drove her ashore, despite the efforts of two tugs, and 110 people were lost, most of them Chinese. Those that survived did so under the most trying and tragic conditions. This was by far the worst disaster the Association suffered.

Even in this routine calling, where ships spent nearly nine months a year at anchor or in a berth, navigating skill and weather ken were vital. Ice was not unknown, and fog, unlit channels and strong currents taxed the masters and mates to a high degree.

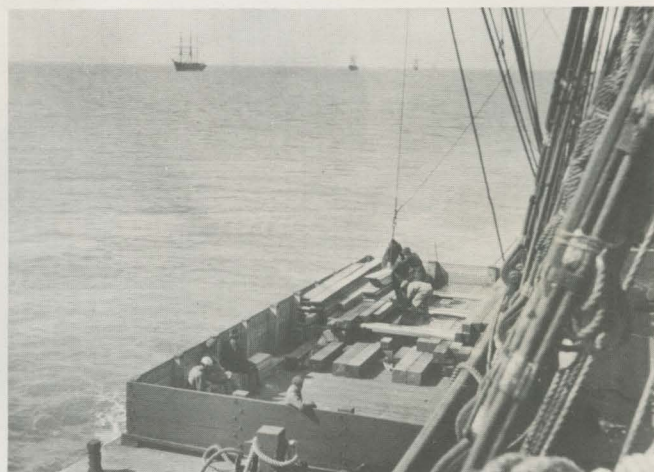
Captain Nicholas Wagner, who was master of the *Balclutha* in 1906 and the *Star of Bengal* in 1907 and 1908, refused to substantiate the claims of Captain Bill Mortensen, who began his career with the Association before the turn of the century, that the *Star of Alaska* was the fastest ship in the fleet. Even when both men had retired to Sailors' Snug Harbor in their declining years, they most decidedly failed to agree on this point. Captain Wagner died in 1943 at a ripe old age, Captain Mortensen lived for another five years.

The "Star of Greenland"

San Francisco Maritime Museum Assoc. Photo



Fishermen's quarters in the 'tween deck of the "*Star of Holland*." The Italian and Scandinavian fishermen acted as sailors on the square riggers during the voyages to and from Alaska. The quarters for the Oriental cannery hands, known as "*Chinatown*," were located at the other end of the ship



Lumber, pilings, coal, tin plate, and box shooks were principal north-bound cargoes carried to Alaska in the "*Star*" ships. Here the "*Star of Holland*" discharges lumber for Diamond M Cannery, Naknek

Loading rice aboard a salmon packet. The Chinese labor contractor supplied his own stores. This photograph was made on the San Francisco waterfront April 12, 1906, just sixteen days before the disastrous earthquake and fire struck the city

Photo from John W. Procter Collection, San Francisco Maritime Museum





Aboard the "Star of Poland" in 1916, in a light fair wind. Capt. Rasmussen (left) and his mate (squatting) in the foreground

Photo from Capt. W'm. Dianus

THE GREAT STAR FLEET

Part II: Fate Writes the Final Chapter in the History of These Famous Vessels

By HAROLD D. HUYCKE

(Last month's instalment described the formation and early development of the Alaska Packers Association's famous "Star" fleet of square-rigged cannery tenders.)

IN 1908 the bark *Willscott* was bought and renamed *Star of Iceland*. She remained in the company's service until 1925. She was another British-built bark, dating from 1896, a dead-weight carrier with no speed records. When only a year old, she had been dismasted off the Japanese coast and sailed under jury rig 4,000 miles in 61 days. She was then sold to San Francisco owners and put in general cargo trades, mostly from Hawaii to the Atlantic Coast via Cape Horn with sugar and back with coal or other cargoes. In 1929 she put to sea for the last time, bound to Japanese scrappers.

In 1909 the bark *Homeward Bound* was bought and renamed *Star of Holland*. She had a few unique twists to

her history, too. She had been built as the ship *Zemindar* in 1885 in Belfast, Ireland, by Harland and Wolff for the Indian trade, and had spent nearly 15 years in that service for the Brocklebanks of Liverpool. Then she spent a short time under the German flag as the *Otto Gildemeister* of Bremen, but was dismasted in 1901 on a voyage from Yokohama to Portland, Ore. She came under the American flag when enough money was spent on her refitting to qualify her for United States Registry, and for the next eight years sailed in the Cape Horn trade between California, Oregon, and Europe.

Captain Chadwick Thompson had some shares in her, and tried out his own rig on her, which proved pretty successful. Captain Thompson rigged her as a sort of bark, but kept a single squaresail on the mizzenmast, followed by an immense ringtail which was typically Pacific Coast stuff. Sold to the Alaska Packers in 1909, she was re-

named *Star of Holland* and converted to a conventional bark. After being sold a couple of times as a barge, she was broken up for scrap in 1950.

From 1909 to 1912, the Alaska Packers bought the bark *Kaiulani*, which was renamed *Star of Finland*, and the big four-mast barks *Acme*, *Astral* and *Atlas*, renamed *Star of Poland*, *Star of Zealand* and *Star of Lapland*. The Standard Oil Co. of New York, owner of the last-named trio, had commissioned the famous shipbuilding family of Sewall of Bath, Maine, to build three 3,000-tonners for their case-oil trade to the Far East, with an eye to picking up cargoes homeward in the Hawaiian sugar trade, or general and lumber trades from the Pacific Northwest to the Atlantic. They were profitably employed for a little over ten years, but by 1910 the Standard Oil Co. found cargoes hard to obtain in the face of steamship competition. The Alaska Packers bought them as they

came on the market, the last being the *Acme* after she completed a westbound passage to Puget Sound in 1913, one of the last such voyages of an American flag ship.

Even the Sewalls of Bath began to dispose of some of their ships. They had built ten steel-hulled sailing ships and for a number of years had operated the British-built four-mast bark *Kenilworth*. They let the latter go in 1908. She became the *Star of Scotland*, a name familiar for many years along the California Coast.

As the competitive deep-water trades in which sailing ships had once been profitably engaged were captured by steamers, the market for sailing vessels was poor. But for the salmon packers, these ships might never have survived the brief period of discard that preceded World War I.

That war found the Association with 16 iron and steel windjammers and

The "*Star of Alaska*" close-hauled at sea (right)

San Francisco
Maritime Museum

The "*Abner Coblurn*" was forced aground at Menshikott Point by ice in 1918. The crew "picnicked" ashore



about eight wooden vessels. With the shortage of shipping throughout the world, the Association was in a happy position. Shipping people of the Coast were anxious to charter sailing ships for general cargo voyages in the Pacific in the off-season when they would otherwise have been laid up in Alameda.

The *Star of Holland* made a couple of voyages with lumber to Australia and Manila, and later returned to Alaska. The *Star of Poland*, formerly *Acme*, was a better offer on charter than her smaller contemporaries, and was chartered in the fall of 1916 for Australia, Chile and Manila. Homeward bound from the Philippines in the fall of 1918, she was wrecked on the Japanese coast.

Star of Finland returned to old familiar routes when the APA chartered her for a round trip to Hawaii, returning with sugar in 1917. The voyage was not without bad weather and trouble, but she weathered the gales and returned to Alaska in the spring. She continued thus for another decade, being laid up in 1927.

With the entry of the United States into the War, the government seized

a number of German ships in United States ports in 1914 and turned them over to the Shipping Board to operate. For three years after the war a boom in world-wide shipping continued, but in 1921 the bottom fell out of freight rates and laid up many sailing vessels and steamers. The former German ship *Steinbek*, which had been seized in 1917 in Eagle Harbor, Wash., and put into operation as *Northern Light*, came into New York in the spring of 1921. In the spring of 1922 the Packers bought her, with money they received from the Government over the loss of the *Star of Poland* in 1918, and brought her to San Francisco with a load of coal. She was renamed *Star of Falkland* and put into the Alaska business.

Down in New Orleans one of the most famous sailing ships ever to carry the flag to sea was laid up for lack of cargoes. The *Edward Sewall*, a product of the Sewall yard, now owned by the Texas Co., had lain for over a year in the Mississippi River. Captain Halvorson and a Mr. Iversen of the Alaska Packers looked her over and decided she was a good buy. In February, 1922,

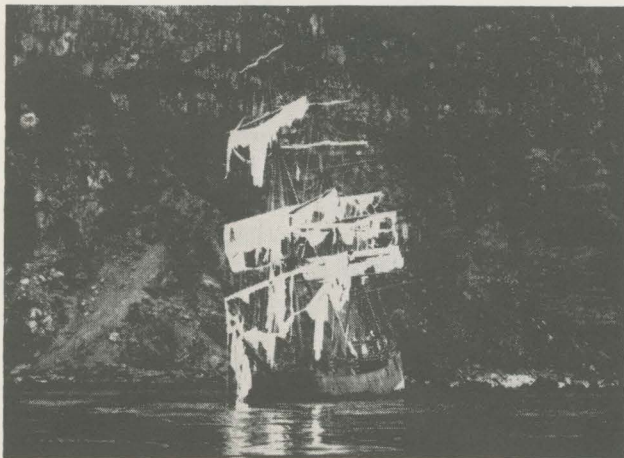
she left the *Crescent City* in tow in March, the tug *Barranca* taking her as far as Colon. She had a general cargo, likely the last one carried intercoastally by a sailing ship. Early in May she arrived in San Francisco. She was renamed *Star of Shetland*, and she and the *Star of Falkland*, were the last sailing vessels purchased by the APA.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1922 she lay in the Moore shipyard in Oakland being overhauled. Though the Association doubtless felt it could profitably operate sailing ships indefinitely, 1922 was not a year for brash and optimistic speculating. Shipowners in San Francisco were beginning to cast long looks at their inventories, consisting largely of wooden vessels. Robert Dollar had bought a fleet of large steel square-riggers which had lain idle for six years in Santa Rosalia, Mexico, a small mining port in the Gulf of California, and when they were towed to San Francisco they weren't the best looking of ships. Hind Rolph and Co. owned a few square-riggers, but were bringing them home in 1921 for an indefinite lay-up. None of these ships went to sea again.

It seemed to be a poor time to plan continued operation of large sailing vessels, but the Alaska Packers were not primarily in the shipping business. In the early 1920s the Association began laying up the older wooden ships, followed by the smaller and older iron and steel ships. As buyers were found, most of them disappeared on one-way voyages to obscure corners of the Pacific Ocean, or were sold to the movie moguls of Hollywood who needed authentic-looking props which would burn, sink or explode on command. Steamers replaced the ships whose tall masts had towered above the sheds in Alameda, and 1930 a depression added to the pessimism of the shipping world.

We're back again to the *Star of Alaska*, as she leaves the slip in Alameda, the solitary ship chosen from a dwindling fleet of finely-kept but out-of-date vessels to go north for the annual salmon fishing. But she goes in tow of the company steamer *Arctic* and keeps her sails furled. On Sept. 16 she appeared off the Golden Gate, rolling in the swell, a long towline leading ahead to the steamer *Kvichak*. She had not made her own way at all this year, and when her cargo was out she was tied up with her sisters and offered for sale.

That was nearly 30 years ago. Where did that great fleet of ships go?



Star of Alaska herself is still in the neighborhood, but she has had her appearance changed considerably. *Star of Chile* was sold in 1926 and became a barge named *Roche Harbor Lime Transport*, making a couple of coast-wise voyages under tow, full of lime-rock, before being laid up in Puget Sound. During the Second World War she was rigged as a four-masted schooner, but she sat on a rock in British Columbia waters and returned to Lake Washington with a lump of cement in her bottom to keep the water out. After eleven years of idleness she

was sold, repaired and used as a barge in Canadian waters.

Star of India, that solid old ship with her heavy Swedish iron plates, was sold in 1926 too, and went to San Diego to become a floating Maritime Museum. She is there today, tied up near downtown San Diego. Her rig has been severely cut down and she needs paint, but there's no mistaking this 95-year-old vessel.

Star of Peru hoisted the tricolor of France in 1926, took a cargo of lumber from Vancouver, B.C., to the South Pacific Islands and was converted to a hulk there.

Star of Italy was cut down in 1927 to be towed away to Buenaventura, Colombia, for use as a barge. This ship that had such a beautiful rake to her masts and sat so gracefully in the water, was one of the last survivors of the fleet, but she became a hulk in some obscure alien port.

Star of Russia was sold and took a load of lumber from Tacoma to Samoa before being hulked in New Caledonia. She was renamed *La Perouse* for that last voyage. For the next three decades she lay not far from her old sister of Alaska days, *Star of Peru*.

Star of France fell into the hands of some people from Southern California who saw in her only the potentialities of a fishing barge. She was sold in

1934, converted to a barge in Alameda, towed to Redondo Beach and anchored a mile or two off-shore. For the next seven years she suffered the torments of neglect, while rubber-legged landlubbers splattered mackerel slime, sodapop and candy wrappers over her decks. Here was a ship which had raced home from India in the 1870s with jute for the British Isles; a relic of the splendid Victorian era when all the grace of wooden clippers had gone into hulls of iron and lost little in the transition. In 1940 she was shifted to the more lucrative fishing grounds off the San Pedro Breakwater. Then one day in September, 1940, a Jap steamer cut her down in a thick fog and sent her to the bottom.

Star of Greenland, which had showed her skysail yards to dockside watchers along the Melbourne 'front in her youth, was sold to Swedish owners in 1929. They renamed her *Abraham Rydberg* and kept her busy with cargoes of grain, sailing around the world, training boys for the sea. World War Two found her in the North Atlantic, near the Faeroes, and she was ordered to the United States. For a year or two she was a visitor to the Atlantic ports and somehow managed to escape the U-boats, but she was eventually sold to Portuguese buyers who converted her to a motorship. She struggled on as the *Foz Do Douro*, finally going the way of all outdated machinery, into a scrap pile, only a couple of years ago.

Star of England was sold in 1932. Her new owners dreamed up a pay-as-you-go, round-the-world cruise, but the money was short and the plans went up in smoke. *Star of England* was again sold, and went to Canada for use as a barge, in which capacity she is still afloat today.

The "*Star of Falkland*" ended her days on an iron-bound coast in 1928 (left)

The "*Star of Alaska*," restored to her original name of "*Balclutha*," recently being towed to her permanent berth at the San Francisco Maritime Museum



Star of Shetland, *Star of Lapland* and *Star of Zealand* were all laid up in the late 1920s, but weren't sold until 1934. These latter day big carriers were still good, and the Association put more good money into their upkeep even after the *Star of Alaska* came home for the last time in 1930. But it became hard to find men who would go out in the sailing ships.

One by one, the three big Sewall-built four-masted barks were towed away, loaded with salt and scrap steel cargoes, on one-way passages across the Pacific to Japan where they were scrapped. The *Star of Shetland*, hard old battler of the sea, was the last to go in September 1936.

Then only the *Star of Finland* remained. It was hoped that she would be kept as a relic of the days of sail. The Alaska Packers Association was proud of its past, and much attention and nostalgia were lavished on these ships, so it seemed altogether proper to try to keep the *Star of Finland*. But in 1939 she was sold for a good price and only the steamers were left in the Alameda yard.

The darkening horizon of World War II proved to be a form of salvation for this last survivor, and in 1941 she was chartered to load lumber for South

Chow time for the "Star of France's" Italian fishermen in 1918. She had three galleys—American, Chinese, and Italian styles

Axel Widerstrom



Africa. She sailed in September from Grays Harbor, reaching Durban in 126 days, and thence plodded on down to Hobart, Tasmania. Troubles plagued the old bark and she was sold to the United States Army, towed to Sydney and slashed down to a hulk. She survived the war in the Southwest Pacific and was finally taken to the Philippine Islands and shoved upon a beach, where she remains.

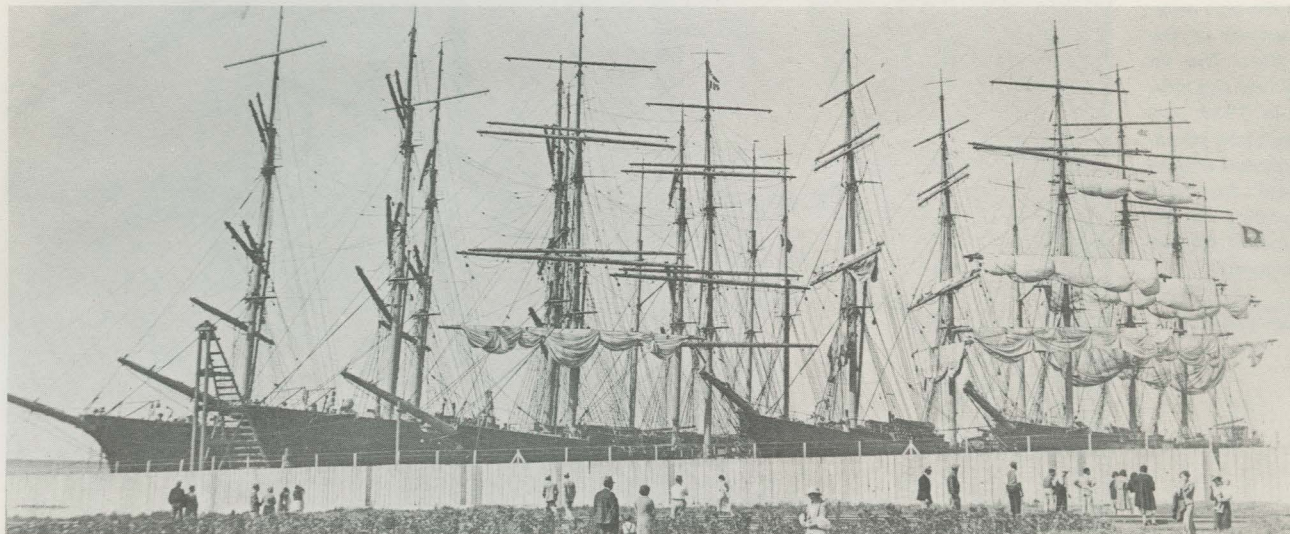
Where once the port-painted hulls of Limejuicers could be seen in San Francisco Bay's anchorages, only one remains. The *Balclutha* has completed a cycle of history, in a sense, because

she presently lies moored to a San Francisco waterfront wharf, not too far from the spot where she rode at anchor as a new ship back in 1887. She is port-painted today as she was then, but the men who built her, and her old owners, are history. Those who sailed her in her British days can hardly be found in the British Isles, and even around San Francisco one has to look a little harder for the generation of seamen who remember her as the *Star of Alaska*. It is fitting that the *Balclutha* has found her last mooring in San Francisco, which has been her home for more than half a century.



In the early 1920s the pantheon of square riggers at the foot of Paru Street was still intact

Photo from Capt. Carl Johannesen



By the early 1930s only five were left. In 1934, when this picture was taken, it had been five years since any of the "Stars" had voyaged north under sail. The three large four masted barks in this picture were sold to Japan for scrap before the year was out

Photo from John W. Procter Collection, San Francisco Maritime Museum

Bristol Bay fishermen
and their "Columbia
River gillnetters"

Law required use of
these two man sprit-
rigged "Columbia
River gillnetters" until
1950, when power
boats were finally al-
lowed in Bristol Bay
fishing. The gillnet
boats for Alaska were
made in San Francisco
and transported North
by sailing ship

Photo from
Capt. Carl Johannesen



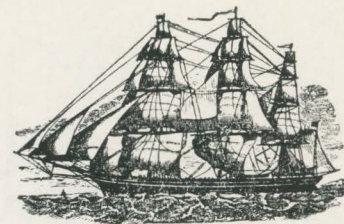
"Star of India" nears
her centennial at San
Diego. The success of
"Balclutha" at San
Francisco has sparked
new interest by San
Diego in the only other
intact survivor of the
"Star" fleet. The 96
year old hull was dry-
docked in 1959 and
rerigging is now sched-
uled. Garboard strakes
of 15/16" iron and
topside plating 11/16"
thick account for her
longevity

Photo from
Karl Kortum



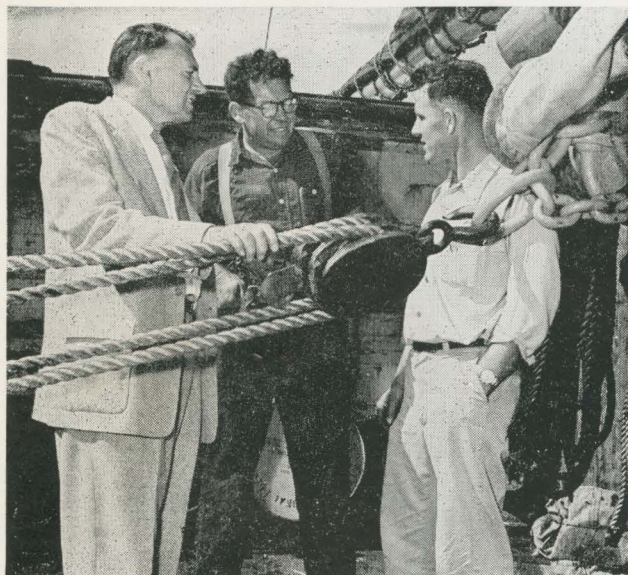
ALASKA PACKERS ASSOCIATION NUMBER

SEA LETTER



ROGER OLMSTED
BASIL KNAUTH *Editors*

... ABOUT THE AUTHOR



CAPT. A. F. RAYNAUD, KARL KORTUM and the author prepare the "C. A. Thayer" for sea and her final restoration in San Francisco.

Harold Huycke first saw the Pacific Ocean as a boy of 8 when his family moved from Oklahoma in 1930. Entranced by the sea he determined to become a commercial fisherman. With the outbreak of war he entered the California Maritime Academy, graduating in 1944 with his 3rd mates license. As an officer and Ensign in the Naval Reserve he sailed throughout the war in Liberty ships, Victory ships, tankers and even the old wooden steam schooner *Stanwood*. After completing his education at the University of Southern California he spent 4 years at sea, advancing his license to master, before experiencing the shore end of ship management with positions at Weyerhaeuser and States Marine steamship companies.

Harold's wide ranging interest in Maritime History found focus in the long-neglected story of west coast shipping and the great square-rigged Alaska Packers fleet in particular.

Adding further to his "feel" for the great days of sail he spent almost a year in conjunction with the Maritime Museum in restoring the 3-masted schooner *C. A. Thayer* for the State of California, which project will soon be completed by her presentation to the public as part of the San Francisco Maritime State Historical Monument.

Mr. Huycke's continued research and writing is being devoted to a history of 12 German sailing vessels which spent their last days on the Pacific Coast. Harold's biographies of a number of the STAR ships have been published by the AMERICAN NEPTUNE at Salam, Mass.

The San Francisco Maritime Museum Association is a non-profit corporation supported solely by your membership contributions (and by revenues from the ship BALCLUTHA). Our budding publication program, our efforts to improve our research resources for the benefit of both scholar and the inquiring public, are almost wholly dependent upon membership support.

A membership application has been incorporated in this issue of the SEA LETTER. If you are not a member, or if your membership has expired, we hope you will mail this application to the Maritime Museum. We urge those who are members to support their Museum Association by passing the application along to a friend.

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